

## **An Examination of EPA Risk Assessment Principles and Practices**

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Recently, the Agency's Risk Assessment Task Force, a group of EPA risk assessment professionals, produced a staff paper, *An Examination of EPA Risk Assessment Principles and Practices*, that represents an effort by the EPA to examine how risk assessment is conducted at the Agency. The staff paper presents the perspectives of EPA risk assessors on how they understand risk assessment to be conducted at the Agency. Further, it presents staff recommendations for EPA and interested parties to consider for how EPA can move forward with strengthening and, where appropriate, improving its risk assessment practices. This staff paper does not represent official EPA policy.

The EPA Science Advisor and other senior EPA officials requested this report to further the discussion and examination of some broad questions about risk assessment. The Task Force's examination is considered supplementary to other activities, such as revisions to EPA's risk assessment guidelines. The contents of this staff paper are, in large part, presented in response to public comments submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in their request for public comment on risk assessment procedures in the Federal government (68 FR 5492-5527, February 3, 2003). While this paper is not explicitly a "response to comments" document, the comments to OMB were used to suggest practices that the staff paper could address.

Most important for the near future, this staff paper will serve as a vehicle for opening up a broader dialog among EPA staff, EPA managers, and external parties about the practice of risk assessment at EPA. Several activities may take place as a part of this dialog, including possible workshops with EPA's Science Advisory Board or other external groups, such as the National Academy of Sciences, on promising areas for further development of EPA risk assessment practices. Also, meetings with professional societies and other interested parties to seek their input and suggestions can be sought. This staff paper represents the first step in a multistep process geared toward advancing risk assessment principles and practices at EPA. Newer and better approaches for risk assessment may emerge as the dialog proceeds.